

BOOKS

A History of the Army's Rebirth

Prodigal Soldiers: How the Generation of Officers Born of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War by James Kitfield. Simon & Schuster, N.Y., 1995. 476 pages, \$25.00.

Prodigal Soldiers is a hard-hitting, one-on-one personal account of how the American military lost, then found, its soul. It superbly captures the emotion, passion, and love fundamental to the profession of arms. Kitfield's selection of General Barry McCaffrey, Admiral Stan Arthur, General Chuck Horner, and General Tom Draude is right on target because their stories are representative of the "emotional roller coaster" experienced by every soldier, sailor, airman or marine who joined the military, trained, went to war, and preserved the peace. It is a quick read that most will be able to immediately identify with and relate to their personal experiences. Several times, I caught myself wandering back through my 17 years of service, remembering my own participation in this story of being lost, then found. The book leaves the military reader with an overwhelming pride in those warriors who stayed the course and made a difference, yet sad for another group of officers no less committed or competent but on whose watch the collective soul was diminished.

Kitfield tells the story of officers who refused to submit to the madness around them as they rose through the ranks. It was because of that almost maniacal focus on doing the right thing that they, by chance, happened to be in the right place at the right time to participate in the greatest feat of arms in the modern era — Operation DESERT STORM — thus purging the American military and the American people of that cloud called Vietnam, and re-establishing the sacred trust and confidence between America and its military. This book offers great insights into the incredible amount of emotional, intellectual, and physical energy required to recapture the essence of our profession.

Kitfield captures, in great detail, perhaps one of the most courageous acts ever by a senior American military leader — General Edward "Shy" Meyer's "Hollow Army" testimony before Congress. He opened the front gate and laid bare an American military establishment shaken to its very core, and coming apart at the seams. His pronouncement allowed the Joneses, Creeches, Depuys, and Starrys to begin the healing process in a purposeful, coherent fashion. He also understood that it would take more than a determined force, but also a tremendous capital resource investment, to attract quality recruits, build the finest equipment, provide family care programs, ensure real-

istic, demanding, training opportunities, and empower tactical leaders. No amount of good intentions or hard work can create a professional force such as the one assembled in 1990 in Saudi Arabia without the institutional wherewithal that allows leaders and soldiers to focus on their warfighting mission.

Kitfield also gives superb treatment to the genesis of the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act, which set the stage for the transformation of the American military into a single warfighting team as opposed to three (or four) services working the seams. Kitfield though identifies the primary culprit of the entrenched parochialism as the "iron major," a term of "endearment" he awkwardly applies to an apparently omnipotent group of officers who he characterizes as bent on thwarting any real progress. He is off the mark in this case because, in truth, the power of these "iron majors" is directly proportional to the lack of definitive guidance from senior leaders. In situations where the "Big Hand-Little Map" philosophy of senior leadership is translated into "I'm not sure what I want but I'll recognize it when I see it — work harder," there develops a rich environment for institutional entropy embodied in the "iron major" thought, and drives everyone to the lowest common denominator. General Jones, Senator Goldwater, and Congressman Nichols recognized that fact and created a mandate so prescriptive that even the "iron generals" cannot diffuse its power. I assure you that in the 24th Division, under MG McCaffrey, there was no lack of definitive guidance and, therefore, the professional life expectancy of Kitfield's "iron majors" in the 24th Division would have been brief at best. In fact, being an "iron major" in the Victory Division was a badge of honor because it meant you could operate on four hours sleep a night and still produce results. Somehow, I believe that then-Majors McCaffrey and Horner would have been proud of the title because it really reflects the moral, intellectual, and physical constitution of that special group of officers who are usually the bridge between senior leader vision and the reality of operating tactical units. Those "iron majors" were the ones who turn commander's intent into battlefield outcome — they "make it happen." Regrettably, Kitfield's characterization confuses the issue and misses the point in this regard.

On balance, Kitfield's work is an intellectually stimulating book that leaves the military reader recommitted to prevent the tremendously dysfunctional trauma of the 1970s. Published at a time when many of the institutional initiatives which "fixed" the Armed Services in the early 1980s are dis-

appearing, the unstated conclusion is ironic. Of particular note are the fundamental programs, such as recruiting standards and robust training and leader development programs. Battalion and squadron commanders, ship captains, and senior non-commissioned officers are the product of a 20-30 year institutional training and leader development commitment from recruitment to retirement. You simply do not find these skilled professionals listed in the Yellow Pages under "Warfighter." These systems were lost in the late 1960s and early 1970s and took a generation to recover — once lost, they just cannot simply be bought back with supplemental funding programs.

Prodigal Soldiers stirs a unique blend of disappointment, pride, and anxiety. As we stand facing the next crisis of confidence, our operational commitments increase, our resources decrease, and our structure is down-sized. Kitfield's challenge is leadership in a time of uncertainty. The challenge is for our senior leadership to create and maintain the institutional conditions for success into the 21st century. The risk is the "hollow Army" of 1979. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines deserve no less.

LTC JOSEPH C. BARTO, III
Joint Warfighting Center
Ft. Monroe, Va.

Lucky War: Third Army in Desert Storm by Richard M. Swain, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: United States Army Command and General Staff College Press, 1995. 369 pages.

This study has not been released for public sale, according to the Superintendent of Documents. Copies will probably be available at military libraries. -Ed.

Colonel Richard M. Swain's *Lucky War* is the first genuine historical account of DESERT STORM to appear amid a host of "quicky books" and journalistic accounts of the war. It joins Rick Atkinson's *Crusade* and Gordon and Trainor's *The Generals' War* as the principal books about the war which begin to interpret the events of 1990 and 1991 in a way which will be useful both to soldiers and historians.

Like *Crusade* and *The Generals' War*, *Lucky War* demonstrates the importance of personality in the conduct of the war. To some, these accounts are irritating since they suggest that professional considerations and patriotism are not the only values demonstrated by senior leaders in combat. The notion that professionalism or patriotism are the chief values which define com-

manders is naive. How officers, regardless of rank, see themselves and each other has always been important. Commanders have a sense of who they are and have egos just as other people do.

This disturbs us because the stakes are so high, but also reminds us that even our bravest, brightest, and highest commanders are, in the end, human beings.

Swain brings to his study an understanding of combat operations based on personal experience, a thorough grounding in American military history and, most importantly, he knows the current history of the Army. Rick Swain understands how the contemporary U.S. Army thinks and how it operates. Accordingly, Swain is able to go beyond the history of the war and deftly weave into his account of operations why General John Yeosock and other soldiers thought as they did, and how they perceived events. What results is a balanced account, not only of Third Army generally, but also of General Yeosock and his chief subordinates. Neither John Yeosock nor his corps and division commanders deserve the abuse meted out by some authors, whose agendas include staking out specific service claims or preserving their own positions in history. (It is hard, for example, to read *The Generals' War* without hearing the strains of the *Marine Hymn*.)

Having said that, Swain's own bias is clear. Rick Swain is a soldier and there is, as a result, some sense that he is justifying or defending Third Army. Still, his assertions are ably made and evidence to support them is documented so the reader may check Swain's sources for themselves. *Lucky War* will be useful for years to come, both to soldiers seeking to understand the art of high command and those who wish to know not only what happened, but why.

COL GREGORY FONTENOT
Director, School of
Advanced Military Studies
Ft. Leavenworth, Kan.

Persian Gulf War Almanac by Harry G. Summers, Jr. Facts on File, New York, 1995. 320 pages, \$35.00.

The Persian Gulf conflict has been the subject of countless memoirs and after-action reviews since its conclusion in the spring of 1991. Now for the first time, a definitive compilation of the events, personalities, and lessons appear in a single volume. Carefully compiled by Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., this almanac is the most comprehensive reference book to date on the Gulf War.

Divided into four parts, the book initially traces the geographical and historical realities of the Persian Gulf region from Babylonian times to Saddam Hussein's invasion

of Kuwait on August 2, 1990. The second section focuses on the chronology of the conflict, from Hussein's request at the Arab Cooperation Council meeting on February 19, 1990, for financial assistance to share the cost of the Iran-Iraq war to the repatriation of allied POWs on March 5, 1991. The heart of the almanac, however, is the third section, which is a detailed listing of the most significant aspects of the war. Over 350 entries are included. Finally, the selected bibliography and index complete the reference portion of this book.

What makes this book so important for future officers and students of the conflict is the reference material contained in the extensive almanac portion. Entries include a diverse range of topics, such as Airland Battle doctrine, coalition forces, divisional units, and virtually every aspect of the maritime, air, and ground campaigns. Summers also examines a number of controversial issues. The role of women in the military, the American media, U.S. mobilization and deployment practices, and ecological and chemical warfare will prove of immense interest to future military strategists and planners. In addition, the author provides biographical sketches of all major civilian and military leaders involved in the conflict.

Another aspect of this book that deserves special mention is the author's own insight into the conflict. A noted military analyst, Summers has published two previous almanacs on the Korean and Vietnam Wars, as well as his classic, *On Strategy*, an examination of the relationship between strategy and policy in the Vietnam War. During the Gulf War, he served as an analyst for all the major American television networks in addition to writing a weekly syndicated newspaper column for the *Los Angeles Times*.

Summers is at his best in tracing the evolution of U.S. military strategy from the strategic defense of the Cold War to the strategic offense. That transition, coupled with the changes in military operational policies, including the expanded role of women on the battlefield, the contributions of the reserve components to battlefield success, the necessity of joint operations and command structures, and the awareness of the importance of combined operations, makes the *Persian Gulf War Almanac* an indispensable companion to the author's previous works.

In short, this almanac is must reading for all military officers. It will remain a superb source book for information and future research on the first major campaign of the post-Cold War world.

COL COLE C. KINGSEED
Associate Professor of History
U.S. Military Academy
West Point, N.Y.

Problems for Platoon and Company by Erwin Rommel, translated by Cyril Koob. Military/Info, P.O. Box 27640, Golden Valley, MN 55427, 1995, 74 pages, \$20.

In 1935, Erwin Rommel wrote this small book so junior officers could think through complex training exercises. He included 19 tactical exercises that progressed from the rifle platoon's deployment from the march to the actions of a reserve in a battalion's attack. Each exercise increased in complexity and in the level of responsibility expected of the leader. The exercises are based on Rommel's experience in World War I and were revised in 1940 and 1944.

One of the most interesting aspects of these exercises is that they include the essence of "tasks, standards, and conditions" which the U.S. Army emphasizes so strongly today in its training. In each exercise, the purpose or task is stated clearly and the conditions described in detail. Those conditions include such things as hearing "single rifle shots" to the time that has passed since the last hot meal. Though the standard is not as clearly stated, a careful reading of the exercise reveals what is expected.

The major shortcoming of this work is the translation. The translator states, "this is more literal than other translations of German military writings you have possibly read in the past. Translations into English have tendency [sic] to lose quite a bit in their content." The problem for the reader, however, is that many of the sentences make little or no sense, and many of the paragraphs have to be studied deeply in order to be understood. Phrases such as "imply the enemy fire," or "defense on the southern hang of 343," or "disruption fire" may make sense to the translator, but they serve only to confuse the reader. Moreover, the work has not been carefully proofread. For example, each exercise includes a "Proposed Outcome" even though the translator in the introduction uses "Proposed Outcome." Problems with translating and proofing become evident in the front of the book, which is entitled "Translators Forward," rather than "Translator's Foreword."

Despite the problems with the translation, this is a useful work. It includes 66 tactical drawings and maps and a wide variety of challenging tactical situations. These will challenge the reader and require careful thinking about responses. Nonetheless, a greater sensitivity to the reader's needs and a clearer translation would have made this book much more useful.

COL ROBERT A. DOUGHTY
Department of History
U.S. Military Academy
West Point, N.Y.